

## Renovated Rameshwaram Temple Opens on The Occasion of Gurudev’s Mahasamadhi

Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles, on Aug.4, in a grand ceremony, rededicated itself spiritually to the teachings of its founder Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda on the occasion of the anniversary of His Mahasamadhi and at the more tangible and physical level, offered its newly renovated temple to the community.

Amidst blowing of conches and chenda melam, Swami Siddhananda, acharya from CM Philadelphia, inaugurated the temple by cutting a ribbon in the presence of CMLA’s head Acharya Swami Ishwarananda and Acharya Mahadevi.

The temple at Chinmaya Rameshwaram, which houses the deities of Lord Shiva, the Ram Parivar and Gurudev was upgraded in double quick time thanks to the efforts of volunteers spearheaded by Dr.Srinivasa Iyer, a septuagenarian and engineer. The temple now has state of the art lighting facilities including star-like twinkling lights on the roof and a high rise domed ceiling – all done with a firm eye on energy saving.

The morning began with rituals conducted by Pandit Sivaramakrishnan, supported by the strong puja group of volunteers who regularly lead the worship at Rameshwaram. The Ganesha puja was followed by the Navagraha puja as well as the propitiation of the gods enshrined at the altar. The Guru Paduka puja was participated in by all present with Acharya Mahadevi melodiously leading the chanting of the archana.

A few speeches were made on the occasion. Dr.D.V.Pillai, the President of CMLA on behalf of the congregation, expressed his happiness at the opening of the temple. Dr.Iyer spoke in detail giving the timeline of the renovation work and displayed visuals of the same.

Swami Ishwarananda making the point that where our heart is the mind and body follow effectively, quoted from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and explained the meaning of the heart or ‘hr-da-ya’ in the context of the work done at the temple by volunteers, saying ‘hr’ means to be drawn in, ‘da’ is to give freely and completely and ‘ya’ is to sustain and be in contemplation over what the heart has been drawn to.

An eagerly awaited segment of the event was the bhajans that were rendered by Swami Siddhananda. Popular in the mission for his music, he began with one devoted to Gurudev Chinmayananda and led the assembled group into different moods of elation and soulfulness getting them to sway and clap along.

The event coordinated by Ravi and Hema Vishnubhotla concluded with lunch Prasad for all.



## Chinmaya Mission-Sikh Community Come Together in Interfaith Harmony

As the divine words of the Shabad “Ram Ram bol Ram Ram, tyaago man ke sagal kaam,” rang through the hall of Chinmaya Mission’s Rameshwaram center here on Aug.26, first a hush fell over the audience and then, deeper into it, had the listeners, deeply moved.

The gentle, meditative suggestion by the Raagi Jatha Bhai Jaswant Singh from Riverside that the devotees chant the name of the lord and let go of desires and negativities of the mind was especially poignant as it was rendered at a program hosted by CM Los Angeles to express solidarity with the Sikh community in the wake of the tragic events that transpired at Wisconsin. On Aug. 5, a gunman mowed down 6 people and injured several others at the Gurdwara in Oak creek leaving bewilderment and pain in the wake of the attack.

Following the holy expressions from the Guru Granth Sahib, two speakers from Southern California’s Sikh community addressed the need for tolerance and understanding.

Navneet S. Chugh, President, Sikh Center of Orange County, began by reading out the names of the Wisconsin victims and their ages. With articulation and citing from the different faiths, he pointed out, that 80 percent of the world’s population belongs to the three Semitic and Hindu and Sikh faiths and that each of them emphasizes prayer, charity and that



all peoples are one. Going to places of worship, he said, helped to reaffirm and rejuvenate the positive and the goal of reaching the ideal. Indeed, he stressed, there were many freeways that could be taken but what was not to be lost sight of was that all lead to the same destination, the same One.

Dr.Amrit Singh, an active member of the Sikh community in SoCal, after making some points from history, converged on what Chugh said about Oneness and quoted Guru Nanak Devji who asked: The Creator is One, so who is to say someone is good or someone is bad? No path is wrong, said Singh, no path is better, all lead to the one god which when understood, leads to the betterment of society so we can serve our neighbor better, who is another human being like ourselves. To the Hindu audience he brought forth the point that the consonants of the Sikh ‘Wahe Guru’ emerged from

Vasudev, Hari, Govind and Ram.

Swami Ishwarananda, head Acharya of CMLA, as the final speaker said, “the whole world is a university, to discover in diversity, a unity, is life.” A sword and a gun can be tools of violence if used improperly, he said, but when used correctly can protect. And just as it is up to us on how to use them, religion too, depends on how we use it. Religion is not wrong, he said, it is we who are wrong when we use it to coerce people into doing what we want them to do. As leaders and thinkers of society with the capability of approaching religion with the right understanding, it is for us to be responsible and be on the right course: yatha raja tatha praja, he quoted from the Ramayana, which implies ‘as the leader, so the followers.’

At Swamiji’s behest and in conclusion, the congregation held a moment of silence in memory of those killed in Wisconsin.

## Summer Kids Camp – Lasting Impact

*Over summer, in June and July, children ranging in ages 5 to 15 attended a week long Young Gita Camp that was held at Rameshwaram, in the South Bay and in Bakersfield. With help from the teachers at each center, the camp was helmed by Swami Ishwarananda, Acharya Mahadevi and Viji Mahadev.*

*The mornings began with the chanting of selected verses and through simple stories and anecdotes, learned the profound truths in the scriptures. The three gunas for instance, was illustrated through stories about Ravana, vibheeshana and Khumbakarna. The week also saw yoga classes, Indian games like kho-kho and kabbadi, and provided enough time for the children to interact and forge friendships.*

**Here are the impressions of one mother, Shweta Agarwal from CM Bakersfield:**

“God has many forms and many names, but God is one.” I heard my six- year-old daughter Ananya say this as we drove back home from the last day of the Youth Summer Camp,. I was surprised and delighted with this learning!

The week-long camp focused on the characters of the Ramayana and Navadhaa Bhakti. With seventy children in attendance, the camp was a huge success for the small Hindu community of Bakersfield. The curriculum was tailored and simplified to teach kids as young as 3.

Swami Ishwarananda led the camp and imparted knowledge in his own unique lucid way, filled with humor. The camp comprised of stories of Lord Rama, his virtues and ideals, the nine modes of love divine, all woven together in a thread of ‘masti’!

The atmosphere of the camp was kept sacred and serene with bhajans and chanting. Morning time at camp was quiet learning time but afternoons were more delightful with several fun filled activities. Children engaged in arts and crafts, extempore speech, jeopardy, games like kabbaddi and pyramid and a fun day with water slides.

7- year- old Vaibhav said “my favorite part was making the painting of Hanuman carrying the Sanjivni mountain.” 12- year- old Viren thought camp was enlightening and fun. Young Anusha summarized it all by saying “it was FUN-tastic.”

On day three of the camp, all the attendees dressed up in their best Indian outfit to pray and seek the blessings of Lord Rama – to the parents present they appeared like little angels being groomed by the divine presence.

On the final evening children presented skits from events in the Ramayana demonstrating the huge amount of learning that they had done in this short span of time.

The tireless efforts of the organizers and volunteers made the camp a success. Sudha Bhatt, was the main coordinator and it was special to see a number of youth volunteers eagerly helping around.

The biggest success of the camp however as to be what



has happened after it got over. I can see changes in my home: from ‘Curious George’ it is now stories of Hanuman, from ‘Dora’ songs it is Raghupati Raghava.

As Swamiji says, “teaching the children is most productive and giving them the right atmosphere is our responsibility. And once they grow up they will be the righteous citizens.” As a parent, I am ever grateful.

## Swamiji’s Summer Series Draws Large Audience

The week after balvihar graduations and its break for summer, Swami Ishwarananda began the Summer Series of talks each Sunday at 10 am. Each week, close to 150 people attended and heard him expound on varied subjects. For eight weeks, he provided nuggets of information that listeners could carry home with them.

He began the series by talking about the Goals of Life and then



moved on to address Spiritual Health, the upside of Meditation over Medication, the Pursuit of Happiness and concluded with Milestones in Spirituality which provided a road map on success in daily life and how through practical application of spiritual practice it can be achieved.

The series was a successful one which drew people not only from CMLA but also the community at large.

## Laugh, Forgive, Be Open: Mahadevji

Life is like a roller coaster ride. Interaction with people in life is unavoidable. But the controls are with us. How to handle the ups and downs is an essential part of one’s life.

In his talk at the Brea temple on July 28, on ‘The Simple 10 Step Recipe for Getting Along with People,’ Acharya Mahadevi explained how simple techniques can be used to respond to different challenges that present themselves in life.

As a side benefit, he said, it will develop Awareness in one’s actions, and enhance a spirit of Enquiry. It will also develop patience and minimize anger. It will



help develop the right attitude in life and enhance your social, personal and professional relationships.

Responding to situations intelligently, not making promises you can’t keep and controlling the tongue in both speech and taste are some points that were brought out, Mahadevi said.

Forgiveness, Open-mindedness, and laughter, he said, are what is required in life.

We can then sit in the “eye” of the hurricane and watch the swirling world around us, unperturbed; so we may stand firm like a lighthouse in a stormy sea

## Rewind the Mind...A Meditation Retreat

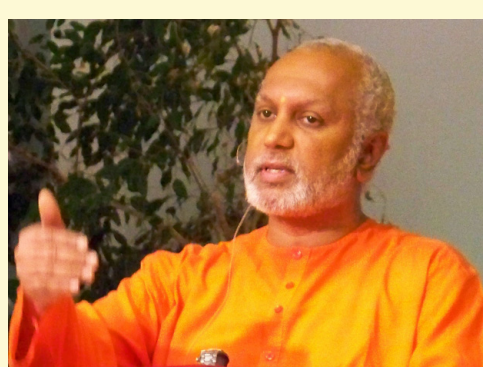
**BY DIANA GORDON**

Swami Ishwarananda presented a special meditation retreat ‘Rewind the Mind’ at Chinmaya Mission, Bakersfield on July 28. A culturally diverse group of approximately 50 people were present. For many, it was their first time attending any event at the Mission.

Swamiji has graciously agreed to help the Bakersfield Mission reach out to those in the local community who may have an interest in Eastern spirituality, by offering interesting talks on general subjects, including “Finding a Purpose”, which he had earlier presented in April. Participants’ feed-

back was very positive and many indicated they will be returning for weekly classes offered at the Mission.

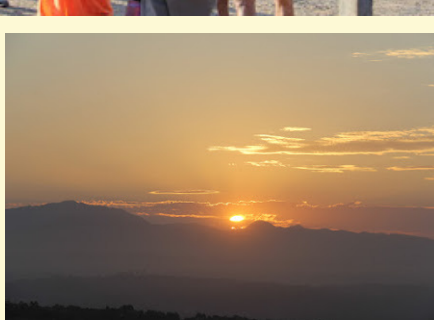
‘Rewind the Mind’ offered four meditation techniques including Yogic breathing, chanting with a mantra, visualization (upasana), and contemplation. Additionally, Swamiji instructed the participants in the technique of Yoganidra as a way to re-educate the subconscious mind. He explained that Yoganidra is to be used in conjunction with regular meditation practice, not in lieu of. As each technique was presented, the participants practiced with Swamiji’s guidance.



## Being With Nature



CMLA members and friends can now join Swamiji on hikes. Once a month, those interested can join in early in the morning and hike along the beautiful vistas so unique to Southern California.



## For the Archives!



Our Men in Orange!

Please send articles and pictures for publication to Nimmi Raghunathan: [nimmicmla@gmail.com](mailto:nimmicmla@gmail.com)

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